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PRESS RELEASE

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Jeep Ski and Snowboard Championship March 10-11

Competition open to varied skill levels, with emphasis on fun

By IMCOM-Europe MWR Marketing

HEIDELBERG, Germany--Skiers and snowboarders are invited to compete in the Jeep 2007 U.S. Forces Europe Ski and Snowboard Championship set for March 10-11 at the NATO School and Kolben Ski Area in Oberammergau, Germany.

The annual Army Outdoor Recreation event features competition in alpine ski slalom and giant slalom, and snowboard giant slalom events. U.S. ID-cardholder military men and women, civilians, and family members age six and up are eligible to participate.

While the races are competitive with medals awarded, the emphasis is on fun, said John O'Sullivan, IMCOM-Europe MWR Recreation Program Manager.

"We see a variety of skill levels on our course. Not all racers are in it for speed; just having the opportunity to run the gates is all the enticement needed for many of our participants," O'Sullivan said.

Snowboarders and skiers will compete in racer, professional, youth and advanced youth classifications. Entrants in the adult racer class will compete in active duty or civilian divisions, in men's or women's open (age 18-29), senior (age 30-39) or master's categories (age 40 and up.) Military skiers earning local commander cup points for their unit are also entered in this class.

Professional class skiers are civilian ID-cardholders who are associated with providing ski or snowboard related services—such as instructor, trip guide, or ski patrol—on a paid, compensated or volunteer basis. Active duty military with professional credentials may compete in the racer class.

Youth class skiers age six to 17 compete in boy's or girls minor (age six to nine), junior (age 10 to 12), and senior (age 13 to 17) categories. Youth skiers will race on the same course as the adults and must have the ability to control their speed and turns on the steep hills of 'blue' runs.

The Ski and Snowboard Championship is being enhanced this year with the addition of a youth advanced competition class, said Joe Harris, U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden Outdoor Recreation Director and one of the event coordinators.

"To provide a fair and equitable level of competition among the youth categories, children who have been on a ski or snowboard team for two or more years or who have competed in 10 or more competitions will compete in the youth advanced class," Harris said.

Ski helmets must be worn by all youth skiers, said Harris, adding that race organizers highly recommend helmets for all race participants.

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Jeep Ski and Snowboard Championship

There is no entry fee for participation in the racing events. However, all competitors need to provide their own equipment and purchase their own lift tickets. Equipment, including helmets, for both snowboarders and skiers is available for nominal fees from local outdoor recreation program checkout centers, said Harris.

All participants are invited to an awards dinner at the NATO School Lodge in Oberammergau on Saturday, March 11.

"The awards banquet on Saturday night is always a real highlight of the Ski and Snowboard Championships each year," said O'Sullivan. "The dinner is free for all racers. It's a fun evening where all the racers and their family and friends come together after a great day on the slopes. We present the awards for the snowboard and ski giant slalom races, and we also have lots of give-aways provided by our event sponsors. So even if you don't go home with a medal, you've got an equal chance to walk away with a new snowboard or skis, clothing or other gear, or even a new bike."

For those who don't race, the cost to attend the award dinner is 10 Euros, O'Sullivan said.

With the move of the event this year to Oberammergau, an additional perk for participants is that lift tickets for the Kolben Ski Area also include a two-hour usage of the local swimming pool.

"We really appreciate all the great cooperation and assistance we have received from staff and administrators at the NATO School," said O'Sullivan. "Without their generous support, this year's event would have been much tougher to coordinate."

Registration forms for the Jeep 2007 U.S. Forces Europe Ski and Snowboard Championship are available at Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation outdoor recreation centers or online at www.mwr-europe.com. Pre-registration ends at midnight March 7. Late registration will be available on-site at the NATO School Community Club on March 9 from 6-9 p.m. and at the Kolben Ski Area on March 10 from 8-9 a.m.

"We really urge snowboarders and skiers to pre-register," said Harris. "The order in which you race in your division category is determined by when you send in your registration. It's easy to submit your registration to us by email or fax, and if you register early you will be one of the first to race in your class. If you wait until the last minute and register on-site, you'll be waiting around, because late registrants will race only after scheduled categories have completed their runs."

Contact Wiesbaden Outdoor Recreation at DSN 337-5760 or civilian 0611-705-5760 for registration information and event details. Or go online to www.mwr-europe.com.

The Jeep 2007 U.S. Forces Europe Ski and Snowboard Championship is an Installation Management Command-Europe Morale, Welfare and Recreation program, hosted by U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden with assistance by U.S. Army Garrison Hessen. Corporate sponsors partnering with MWR to support this year's event are title sponsor Jeep (OMSC/Exchange New Car Sales), Stars & Stripes, JR Sports, The North Face, and Heater Meals; event sponsorship does not imply federal endorsement.

Further information on IMCOM-Europe MWR is available at www.mwr-europe.com.

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